

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, May 28, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. 10 rue Nitot, Tuesday, May 28th 1895. My dear Alec:

I want to tell you of something that has pleased and encouraged me. This is that both children were so much interested in their French novels this evening that it was almost impossible for me to get them to bed.

On general principles one wouldn't expect an American Mother to rejoice in her children's liking for French novels, but I have read both in the English translation and heard of the reputation of their author "Henri Greville," and believe the children will take no harm. What pleases and encourages me is that they should know enough French to enjoy the books and read them for pleasure. They did not want to in the beginning and Daisy tried to bargain for no more than two pages, but she was presently deeply interested. I had them read without the dictionary as you once advised, just to read for the general sense and not for the meaning of each word. Daisy said at first she couldn't do it, but finds herself mistaken.

I took Elsie to Mrs. Mauro's this afternoon to have her sing to Mrs. Mauro's friend and get her opinion. This lady said Elsie had a very sweet but not strong voice and could follow a tune very well, but not keep the tune in her head. She thought Elsie certainly ought to have lessons if only in correct deep breathing and remembering the time, that she was so well developed it could do her no harm with proper care. I think that if Madame Blanc's friend materializes and agrees I will risk it. She should not lose 2 any chance for self-improvement now. I think that on the whole it is a very good thing I am keeping my children with me, as I am watching Elsie more carefully than I could anywhere else, and trying to cultivate habits of neatness. She has far more idea of that than ever before, and I can get

Library of Congress

her to pick up her things as no one else could. I am going to have her share my room on purpose and will make her take care of the parlor by turns. She does not in the least resent my watching her and is very reasonable and sweet tempered, but so childish I don't know what she is going to do. However she is getting more observant of what people wear and that is a great thing.

Wednesday. My darling your little note from Boston, short as it is and abruptly terminated is such a comfort to me. Only please don't enclose great big parcels with your letters. When I see the great big envelope with your handwriting I think why here's a nice long letter from Alec, and when I opened it and out drops only a tiny note it's rather like the mountain and the mouse! However better, far better the mouse than nothing at all. Dear I love you and thank you for your love. I would say "Yes certainly come over," and then — I hesitate. If you are not going on with your flying machine why can't you come. If you are then I want you to go on with it. I feel as if it were three months since I said goodbye to you, and yet it is still May. It seems the longest May I have known for a long while and at this rate I don't know how I am going to exist until July or August without you. But I thought the idea was that I should leave the children here with Mamma and return to you in July. No — I don't want to stay away from you longer than 3 July, but whether I should return or you should come over I don't know. I certainly think the children should stay in France until September and if I can't leave them here I would like you to come. But if I can leave them I would rather return, unless you want yourself to come over. If you do, certainly come and hurrah! You don't seem to realize that the reason I did not ask you to come over with us was on account of the flying machine, I wanted you to return to it and thought you wanted to. If Mr. Langley has changed your ideas, why then I can't see why you should not come over. I cannot impress on you too strongly that as far as our comfort and safety goes we could not be better off than we are here. Our new apartment will be ready tomorrow and it is newly furnished throughout for us very prettily, the table is very good indeed, and we see next to nothing of any religious ceremonies, so that there is nothing to disturb the children's religious belief. The children have lessons in class with other children in

Library of Congress

the morning and afternoon, join them in their play and then have Alle Fillipi for two hours daily. Daisy has engaged her music teacher. I am still waiting for Mme. Blanc to send a singing teacher for Elsie and the lecture tickets. Elsie has nearly finished her French novel, she has been reading it as steadily as if it were English. Then for me, she has written in her own French words her remembrance of a French story. At table lively conversation goes on all the time in French and the children talk to the French ladies on either side of them. Really I think they are doing very well, and that they will have learned a good deal by September. I am quite happy with them, their 4 time is so broken up that I have seen a good deal of them. You need not worry in the least about me. I am content feeling that I am doing the best for the children, if only you keep well. If you were sick I would come right home. You haven't said how you were and your last telegram omitted the word well. Are you well, I am very well indeed, and so are both children. I will not go to Tours. I have engaged rooms here until the 2nd week in July, then if better may not be we will go either to the sea shore or the mountains and Mrs. Mauro says she will go with us. We see her very often, and I have helped her more than she us, and she wants to keep near us. I think she would be of much help if we needed any. I must close now as my last candle is on the verge of dissolution. It's pretty late too I believe. We went to the Marche aux Fleurs near Notre Dame this morning and bought three plants, three or four dozen peonies and a dozen red roses for seventeen francs. I think we were considerably cheated, still the flowers are magnificent and we couldn't begin to get half as many at home. Are my peonies beginning to open at Beinn Bhreagh. What are you doing in the house in the way of eating and drinking and being taken care of. How slowly the mails do move, just think I don't know the first thing about you. Are you at the point or the lodge is Mr. McCurdy with you or is he not. What do you have to eat, and how are the finances getting on? Do what I may my money seems just drifting invertedly away like the sands in the undertow. You see we are too far from every thing to walk and the omnibuses never seem around when we want them and are always full. The children and Charles waited an hour and a half for a bus one day and Mrs. Mauro one hour. There is nothing 5 in the city proper half as comfortable as our horse-cars except the fiacres and they are much more expensive than

Library of Congress

horse-cars. I really do the best I can. Charles is around the corner from here and comes for orders at all hours of the day. This you understand is not the convent here's the plan of affairs.

My candle's going, adieu au revoir I love you, Mabel.

Place des Etats Unis.